



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lawrence McGuire
City of San Diego
(619) 525-8627
ljmcguire@sandiego.gov

San Diego Hits All Time High in Clean Water

Sewer Spills Reduced 60%, Beach Postings and Closures Reduced 61%

San Diego -- February 05, 2004 - Mayor Dick Murphy and Councilmember Scott Peters today announced that the city has met two major milestones in cleaning up San Diego's waterways.

At a press conference on the shores of La Jolla, the city officials announced sewer spills have been reduced by 60% in the past three years, and beach postings and closures have been reduced by 61%. These incredible achievements were made one year ahead of the initial time frame set.

"These are accomplishments that all San Diegans can be proud of," said Mayor Murphy. "We have far exceeded our initial goal of a 50% reduction in the number of beach postings and sewer spills. But we don't intend to rest on our laurels. More can and needs to be done to build upon our success."

An integral element in cleaning beaches and bays was a 60% reduction in the number of sewer spills in the city since 2000. That reduction also reflects a drop in the number of sewer spills to public waters by 52%.

This success is due in part by an aggressive sewer spill reduction program. In the past three years, the city has televised 1,200 miles of sewer lines thought to be the most susceptible to spills. City crews televised and cleaned 42 critical canyon sewer lines where a spill could have impacted public waters.

The city also increased the rate of rehabilitation and replacement of pipes by 300% - from 15 miles in 2000 to more than 45 miles last year. And next month, the city will complete the cleaning of all 3,000 miles of sewer lines.

The citywide educational effort, "Think Blue" has also contributed to these impressive results. The program teaches citizens about what causes pollution and how to prevent it. San Diegans responded to the call to work to reduce pollution from urban activity. The beaches are the center of our quality of life, and everyone is responsible for their protection.

"Together we have stepped up to do something about the problem and we are getting results," said Councilmember Peters, who co-chairs the city's Clean Water Task Force. "The continued stewardship of our beaches and bays will allow future generations to enjoy these precious resources."

Since the inception of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program in 2001, the program has focused on educating school-aged children, enforcing of the city's Municipal Code, finding sources of pollution and eliminating them, actively seeking state and federal funding sources to enhance program effectiveness, and initiating several strategic infrastructure and maintenance improvements to further stop pollution at its source.

Partnerships between science, industry, universities, environmental organizations, neighboring municipalities, and the state of California have also been instrumental in achieving cleaner beaches, bays and waterways.

“There’s no way any single entity could have done this alone,” said Bruce Reznik, executive director of San Diego BayKeeper. “We plan to continue moving forward and clearly citizen involvement and behavioral change is key.”

How Can You Make A Difference?

The city has some simple everyday steps you can take:

- Sweep or wet-mop, rather than using a water hose to clean your driveways, sidewalks, and gutters.
- Clean-up trash and debris near your home or business before it gets washed into the storm drain.
- Pick-up after your pets. Animal waste can contaminate our beaches.
- Have your sewer lateral inspected for cracks or blockages. Sewage spills enter the storm drain system and close beaches.
- Report illegal discharges to the storm drain conveyance system to the city Storm Water Hotline (619) 235-1000.

#####